

REMARKS OF:  
Pete Johnson, Federal Co-Chairman  
Delta Regional Authority  
W.K. Kellogg Foundation Seminar  
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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH. I AM HUMBLLED AND HONORED TO HAVE BEEN NOMINATED BY THE PRESIDENT AND CONFIRMED BY THE SENATE AS THE FIRST FEDERAL CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY.**

**ENCOMPASSING PARTS OF EIGHT STATES, THIS AUTHORITY WILL SERVE A REGION LONG IN HISTORY AND THE LORE OF LITERATURE AND MUSIC; BUT TOO OFTEN IGNORED IN THE WORLD OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY.**

**MY MESSAGE TODAY RELATES TO THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY. “ONE REGION, ONE UNIFYING VOICE.” WITH THE DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY AS THE ONE UNIFYING VOICE FOR THIS REGION, WE CAN DO WHATEVER WE SET OUR MINDS TO DO.**

**GREAT THINGS HAVE NEVER BEEN ACCOMPLISHED WITH SMALL IDEAS. WE MUST CHANGE THE WAY WE HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT OURSELVES, OUR REGION, OUR NATION AND OUR PLACE IN HISTORY. SO TODAY I WANT TO CHALLENGE YOU TO THINK, DREAM, AND DARE.**

**THINK OPENLY AND HONESTLY ABOUT THE CHALLENGES WE ARE FACING. SET REALISTIC, ACHIEVABLE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR OUR REGION AND ITS PEOPLE WHETHER THEY INVOLVE HEALTH CARE, TRANSPORTATION, EDUCATION OR THE MANY OTHER FACITS OF OUR SOCIETY.**

**THEN I WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO JOIN ME AND DREAM WITH AN EXCITED IMAGINATION AND VISION OF THE GREAT THINGS WE CAN ACCOMPLISH WORKING TOGETHER.**

**BUT JUST THINKING AND DREAMING WILL NOT GET US WHERE WE WANT TO GO. IT WILL TAKE COURAGE AND COMMITMENT IF WE ARE TO DARE TO MAKE THOSE DREAMS COME TRUE AND OUR VISIONS BECOME A REALITY.**

**THEODORE ROOSEVELT ONCE SAID:**

**“FAR BETTER IT IS TO DARE MIGHTY THINGS, TO WIN GLORIOUS TRIUMPHS EVEN THOUGH CHECKERED BY FAILURE THAN TO JOIN RANKS WITH THOSE POOR SOULS WHO NEITHER ENJOY MUCH NOR SUFFER MUCH, BECAUSE THEY LIVE IN THAT GREY TWILIGHT THAT KNOWS NOT VICTORY OR DEFEAT.”**

**FOR TOO LONG, WE HAVE BEEN IN THAT “GREY TWILIGHT” AND THE TIME HAS NOW COME FOR THE PEOPLE OF OUR REGION TO COME TOGETHER WITH A COMMON PURPOSE SO THAT EVERYONE CAN NOW ENJOY THEIR TIME IN THE SUN.**

**WE HAVE THE RESOURCES AND THE PEOPLE TO MAKE THIS ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST SPOTS AND HAVENS FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY.**

**AS A PART OF OUR EFFORTS TO STIMULATE THE ECONOMY OF OUR REGION, WE MUST MARSHALL THE VAST RESEVOIR OF INTELLECTUAL TALENT AND RESOURCES OF THE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES THROUGHOUT OUR REGION.**

**BY CREATING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THESE FINE INSTITUTIONS AND THE CITIES, TOWNS, COUNTIES AND PARISHES OF OUR REGION, WE WILL BRING TO THE DOORSTEP OF OUR RURAL AREAS WORLD CLASS IDEAS, RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY.**

**ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY NOW GIVES US THE REAL OPPORTUNITY TO WORK TOGETHER TO BRING PROGRESS TO OUR REGION.**

**ACTUALLY, AS WE LOOK BACK OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS, WE HAVE HAD WHAT I WOULD CALL A “HUMPTY DUMPTY**

**ECONOMY.” THAT IS WHEN OUR ECONOMY BEGAN TO FALL APART DUE TO THE MECHANIZATION OF OUR MOST BASIC INDUSTRY, AGRICULTURE ALL THE KING’S HORSES AND ALL THE KING’S MEN HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO PUT IT BACK TOGETHER AGAIN.**

**ESSENTIALLY WE HAVE HAD HUNDREDS IF NOT THOUSANDS OF WELL MEANING PEOPLE WORKING, DOING THEIR OWN THING, TRYING TO PUT HUMPTY DUMPTY BACK TOGETHER AGAIN WITH NO ONE COORDINATING THE OVERALL EFFORT. NO WONDER WE HAVEN’T ACHIEVED THE SUCCESSES WE HAD HOPED FOR.**

**NOW IT IS OUR JOB TO GET ALL THE KING’S HORSES AND ALL THE KING’S MEN WHETHER THEY BE GOVERNORS, MAYORS, COUNTY JUDGES, SUPERVISORS, U.S. SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN AND, YES, EVERDAY COMMON CITIZENS BEHIND ONE WELL THOUGHT OUT EFFORT TO PUT OUR ECONOMY BACK TOGETHER AGAIN AND USHER INTO THIS NEW MILLENNIUM A THRIVING ECONOMY WHERE PROSPERITY AND SUCCESS IS COMMON PLACE AND NOT THE EXCEPTION.**

**WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE MISSED OPPORTUNITIES OF THIS PAST HALF CENTURY HAVE CREATED A “LOST GENERATION” WHICH WILL NOT EXPERIENCE THE ECONOMIC BOOM WE SEE FOR OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS. HOWEVER, WE MUST NOT TURN OUR BACKS ON THEM. WE MUST MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SEE THAT THEY ARE CARED FOR IN THE SUNSET OF THEIR LIFE.**

**OUR PRIMARY FOCUS, HOWEVER, WILL BE – AND MUST BE – ON THE FUTURE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME LEARNING FROM THE LESSONS OF THE PAST. AS A REGION, WE HAVE PROVED TO BE VERY ADEPT AT CHRONICLING AND ANALYZING THE PAST – OFTEN IN A “WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN” SCENARIO.**

**IT IS NOW TIME FOR US TO ACCEPT THAT PAST AS PROLOGUE ---- THE PREFACE TO A NEW DAY OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY IN THE DELTA.**

**THE PSALMIST OF OLD BEGGED, “HEAR ME, OH ISRAEL.” TODAY WE URGE “HEAR US, OH AMERICA.”**

**WE URGE CORPORATE AMERICA AND AMERICAN NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS LIKE THE W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION TO CONTINUE HELPING US IN OUR QUEST FOR OPPORTUNITY AND PROGRESS.**

**THOSE WONDERFUL INSTITUTIONS WHICH ALREADY HAVE A PRESENCE IN OUR REGION HAVE BEEN QUITE GENEROUS, AND I BELIEVE THEY ARE FINDING THAT ONE SINGLE VOICE TO COORDINATE THE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE PARTICULAR NEEDS OF THE REGION WOULD BE HELPFUL.**

**WE WOULD INVITE AMERICA’S FOUNDATIONS AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TO JOIN US IN DEVELOPING A LONGTERM STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ADDRESSING THE PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS OF OUR REGION.**

**JOHN F. KENNEDY ONCE SAID, “THE GREAT ENEMY OF THE TRUTH IS VERY OFTEN NOT THE LIE – DELIBERATE, CONTRIVED AND DISHONEST – BUT THE MYTH – PERSISTENT, PERSUASIVE AND UNREALISTIC.”**

**THE LIE IS THAT WE CAN DO NOTHING MORE FOR OUR REGION AND THAT OURS IS A LOST CAUSE.**

**THE MYTH IS THAT WE CAN CONTINUE TO GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS AND ACHIEVE OUR GOALS.**

**THE TRUTH IS THAT WE MUST COME TOGETHER UNITED, UNSHAKABLE, COMMITTED TO A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL OUR PEOPLE IRRESPECTIVE OF RACE, RELIGION OR NATIONAL ORIGIN.**

**AS I WAS PREPARING FOR THIS DAY I WAS REMINDED OF A STATEMENT VERY SELDOM READ OR REPEATED IN OUR DAY AND TIME:**

**“WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF EVIDENT, THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL. THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN UNALIENABLE RIGHTS, AMONG THESE ARE LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.”**

**LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.**

**IN THESE WORDS WE CAN FIND THE TRUE MEANING OF THE AMERICAN DREAM. FOR WE LIVE IN A COUNTRY WHERE LIFE IS A PRECIOUS THING – NOT A VALUELESS COMMODITY EXPENDABLE ON A MOMENTS NOTICE.**

**A COUNTRY WHERE EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD HAS THE LIBERTY TO SPEAK OUT FOR OR AGAINST THOSE THINGS THEY FEEL ARE IMPORTANT WITHOUT FEARING POLITICAL PERSECUTION.**

**A COUNTRY WHERE WE MAY PURSUE ANY VOCATION OR OPPORTUNITY OUR HEARTS MAY DESIRE, WHERE WE ARE LIMITED ONLY BY OUR TALENTS AND IMAGINATION.**

**I BELIEVE THAT THE AMERICAN DREAM IS NOT A FORGOTTEN IDEAL, A VISION OF THE PAST STRIVED FOR AND ENJOYED ONLY BY OUR FOREFATHERS.**

**CASSIE JACOB, A HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR, DESCRIBED HER VIEW OF AMERICA’S BEST:**

**“THE RISING SUN SPARKLES ON THE GOLDEN WHEAT IN THE FIELD AS A FAMRER IN FADED OVERALLS SURVEYS HIS CROP. IN THE BRISK MORNING AIR A FISHERMAN DRAGS HIS NETS ABOARD HIS LITTLE BOAT WHILE THE FOG ROLLS AROUND HIM. IN THE HILL COUNTRY OF WEST VIRGINIA A COAL MINER WALKS UPHILL TO BEGIN HIS DAY’S LABOR WITH HIS**

**LUNCH PAIL CLANKING AGAINST HIS LEG.”**

**“THIS IS AMERICA – THE PRIDE OF THE COMMON MAN AS HE PERFORMS HIS TASKS, THE LAUGH OF A CHILD AS HE PLAYS IN THE AUTUMN LEAVES, AND THE FAITH OF THE SOLDIER IN THE GOODNESS OF THAT CAUSE FOR WHICH HE FIGHTS AND FOR WHICH HIS FORE-FATHERS FOUGHT.”**

**“WE TRULY ARE BUILDING AMERICA TOGETHER. EACH DAY BRINGS US CLOSER TO THE ATTAINMENT OF OUR GOALS, AND EACH QUESTION ANSWERED PRESENTS NEW CHALLENGES TO EXPLORE. AMERICA IS A NATION OF THINKERS, WORKERS, DREAMERS, AND TEACHERS – AND TOGETHER WE CAN CREATE A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL.”**

**I BELIEVE THAT AT THE CORE OF OUR AMERICAN DREAM LIES THE AMERICAN SPIRIT, BURNING WITH INTENSITY UNDER THE ASHES OF DEFEAT AND DESPAIR, WAITING ONLY TO BE REKINDLED BY HER PEOPLE.**

**YOU SEE, I AM ONE OF THOSE WHO BELIEVES THAT OUR PEOPLE ARE THE HEART AND SOUL OF THE AMERICAN SPIRIT.**

**I AM ONE OF THOSE WHO KNOWS THAT IT IS YOUR SPIRIT, YOUR COURAGE, YOUR LOYALTY, AND YOUR DETERMINATION THAT HAS MADE THIS THE GREATEST NATION ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH AND THE HOPE OF THE FREE WORLD.**

**PRESIDENT BUSH AND THE CONGRESS RECOGNIZE OUR NEEDS AND SHARE OUR GOALS. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DELTA REGIONAL AUTHORITY IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD REACHING THOSE GOALS.**

**I URGE YOU ALL TO JOIN US IN THIS ENDEAVOR.**

## **TAKE MY HAND**

**AS WE JOURNEY THROUGH OUR LIFE WE SEE PAIN,  
SUFFERING AND STRIFE; WE SEE HOPE AND PROSPERITY  
AND A BETTER WAY OF LIFE.**

**WE SEE THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH FRIENDS,  
FAMILY AND HOME; AND WE SEE THOSE WHO SEEM LOST,  
HUNGRY AND ALONE.**

**SOME WOULD SAY IT'S THEIR FATE THERE IS NOTHING  
THAT CAN BE DONE; PULL UP THE LADDER I'M ABOARD I'VE  
GOT MINE AND I'M DONE.**

**THESE POOR DON'T REALLY WANT TO WORK THEY'VE  
ACCEPTED THEIR FATE; ANYWAY THERE IS NOTHING WE  
CAN DO BECAUSE FOR THEM IT'S TOO LATE.**

**YET ON THIS TRAIL THROUGHOUT LIFE'S SPAN, SOME  
BELIEVE THEY WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE, IN FACT THEY  
KNOW THEY CAN.**

**THEY KNOW THAT HELPING THOSE IN NEED IS WHAT LIFE IS  
ALL ABOUT; IT IS NOT I'VE GOT MINE SO YOU BETTER LOOK  
OUT.**

**IT'S TAKE MY HAND LET ME HELP COME UP HERE WHERE  
YOU CAN SEE, YOU NEED NOT FEEL LOST COME STAND HERE  
RIGHT NEXT TO ME.**

**TAKE MY HAND LET ME HELP YOU, TOGETHER WE'LL MAKE  
IT PLEASE DON'T STOP, TOGETHER WHEN WE GET THERE  
WE CAN REST AT THE TOP.**

**TAKE MY HAND LET ME TEACH YOU THE LESSONS I HAVE  
LEARNED, WITH HOPES THAT YOU WILL FAR EXCEED THE  
THINGS I HAVE EARNED.**

**SO TAKE MY HAND I CAN HELP ALL IS NOT LOST, TAKE MY  
HAND I WILL HELP YOU NO MATTER WHAT THE COST."**

**WE'RE ON LIFE'S JOURNEY TOGETHER YOUNG AND OLD IT'S  
TRUE, TAKE MY HAND I CAN HELP I TRULY CARE ABOUT  
YOU.**

**SO HOW WILL WE BE KNOWN BY GENERATIONS TO COME,  
PULL UP THE LADDER I'M ABOARD I'M THE DESERVING ONE.**

**OR WILL THEY SEE OUR FAITH AT WORK THROUGHOUT  
THIS GREAT LAND, CARRYING OUR MESSAGE NEAR AND  
FAR, TAKE MY HAND, TAKE MY HAND.**

**WILL YOU TAKE MY HAND HERE TONIGHT IN LITTLE ROCK?  
I CAN HELP; I KNOW I CAN. TAKE MY HAND, TAKE MY HAND,  
I CAN HELP, TAKE MY HAND.**

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH.**